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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR STATE FOR DAS CHENEY, NEA/PD MACINNES,
BOURGEOIS, IIP/T/SV CARMEN APONTE AND SCOT TERRENCE;
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SUBJECT: Media Training Workshop combines Iraqi,
Palestinian, and Jordanian journalists

1. Summary: In support of the MEPI goal of encouraging a professional and independent media, PA Amman, in cooperation with PA Jerusalem and Baghdad organized a three-day workshop (October 6-8) on "Relations between Journalists and Media Officials." Boosting PA Amman's ongoing media professionalization goals, the program strengthened interviewing, research and other media skills among Iraqi, Palestinian and Jordanian journalists. It built linkages between PA and the young journalists and raised their awareness of the need to avoid polemics and strive to give their audience an objective picture. The Iraqis especially complained of the skewed picture of their country's reconstruction as presented by Al-Jazira and other regional media intent on accenting the chaos and violence while ignoring the real progress that has been made. Twenty mid-level journalists (5 Iraqis, 6 Palestinians, and 9 Jordanians) took part, representing a wide range of dailies, weekly newspapers, television, radio and internet-based media outlets. End Summary.

2. Description on Activity: Drew Sullivan, who took time from training journalists in the Balkans to direct this workshop, and Nidal Mansour, Chief Editor of an independent weekly and director of the Center for Defending and Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ), conducted a 3-day workshop organized by PA Amman in cooperation with PA Jerusalem and Baghdad. Twenty Jordanian, Palestinian, and Iraqi mid-career journalists representing print, TV, radio and internet media outlets took part. The title of the workshop was "The Relationship Between Journalists and Media Officials", but topics covered also included international standards of fairness and accuracy, the responsibility of journalists to tell the truth or to protect the community, as well as the use of the Internet as a research tool. The workshop included a session with a former Jordanian Minister of Information who was able to give the government perspective, as well as practical exercises, where a Jordanian parliamentary deputy gave a mock press conference and participants were assessed on the strength of their performance at the conference and the stories that they wrote about it.

3. Date: October 6-8, Fiscal Year: 2003, quarter: 4.

4. Justification and objectives: The Jordanian media suffer from a lack of professional development opportunities, among other difficulties. Very few working journalists in Jordan have had formal training of any kind (e.g., a formal journalism curriculum in school), and media organizations are not generous regarding training opportunities for employees. Consequently, Jordanian journalists often lack what are viewed as basic reporting skills, hindering their ability to play a more positive role in this developing society. This state of affairs proved applicable to Palestinian and Iraqi media outlets as well. The quarterly series of media training workshops begun by PA Amman in FY 2000 has attempted to address some of these issues. In this program, the journalists spoke of difficulty in distinguishing between their duty to their readers to report the whole truth, and their duty to the "community," (which could at times be very narrowly defined) to protect it from revelations that might undermine order. They also lacked the techniques that would enable them to gain maximum benefit from press conferences or other forms of media availability.

5. MPP objective and audience reached: Promotion of democracy and freedom of expression by enhancing the professional skills of junior and mid-career journalists in the three countries.

6. Result/impact: Through group exercises and open discussion, workshop leaders Sullivan and Mansour engaged the participants in theory (international standards of accuracy and fairness), awareness building (the need for background research, and the possibility of subject-focused feature type reporting as an

alternative to event-led reporting), as well as practical skill-building (mock interview with present parliamentary deputy). In the practical exercise, they were assessed on their ability to report on the interview that they had conducted, with emphasis on the need to avoid editorializing or pursuing a prior agenda.

17. Material developed by post: Post provided participants with one article recommended by Mr. Sullivan, on "loosening lips," meaning techniques of extracting information from reticent officials.

18. Non USG source of in-country funding/in-kind support: None

19. Quality of U.S. support and IIP offices involved: We received excellent support from Pamela Mills and Nabeel Khoury, and extend a special thanks to Jennifer Bochner for her excellent work and unflagging energy in helping post put together this ongoing and valuable series. GNEHM